

Dozen IIM chiefs on 'illicit' extension

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New Delhi: The Union government has allowed the chairpersons of about a dozen IIMs to continue beyond their terms although such extensions are contrary to both the 2017 Act under which they had been appointed and the amended Act currently in force.

Under the IIM Act of 2017, an IIM's chairperson was appointed for four years by its board of governors without the possibility of extensions.

The chairpersons of about 15-16 IIMs, including IIM Calcutta, completed their regular term around November 2022. However, the education ministry wrote to the B-schools to extend their tenures by a year because it wanted to set up search-cum-selection committees for the appointment of chairpersons by the boards, and had not fully worked out the procedures for the panels' formation.

"The circular was wrong. The government asked the IIMs to extend the tenures of the chairpersons when (the 2017 Act had) no such provisions," the director of an IIM said, seeking anonymity.

Most of the IIMs — about a dozen — did comply with the government's directive but the boards of the IIMs at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Indore and Udaipur ignored the circular and appointed regular chairpersons.

In July 2023, the ministry wrote again to the dozen compliant IIMs asking them to extend the chairpersons' tenure by another six months or till a new procedure for appointing chairpersons had been arrived at.

In August, Parliament

amended the 2017 Act providing for just such a new procedure.

The amended Act, notified on August 16, 2023, took away the boards' power to appoint chairpersons, who it said would be nominated by the Visitor, the President of India. The appointment of the IIM directors, till then the province of the boards of governors, would need the Visitor's approval, the amended Act added.

Yet, the government made no move to get the Visitor to nominate new chairpersons.

An IIM official, who asked not to be quoted, said: "The provision for the appointment of chairpersons in the new law is clear. There was no need to wait. But the ministry has not acted."

The director of another IIM too wondered why so many chairpersons were continuing on extended tenures even now despite this being contrary to the amended law.

On August 31, this newspaper sent an email to higher education secretary Sanjay Murthy seeking the status of the chairpersons on extended tenures.

The ministry replied that "the chairpersons of all IIMs who were holding office as on 15th August 2023, shall continue to hold office till nomination of new Chairperson by the Visitor".

However, the ministry has not communicated this decision to the IIMs, two IIM officials said.

This newspaper sent two more emails to Murthy, on November 13 and December 30, seeking the reasons for new chairpersons not being nominated yet. His response is awaited.